NUMB. LXXXII.

# THE PLAIN DEALER.

*Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,*
*Quam quæ sunt Oculis commissa fidelibus, & quæ*
*Ipse sibi tradit Spectator.* ——————— HOR.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1. 1725.

AN Evil Spirit had taken Poſſeſſion of one of the Villages, in *Lapland*, and turn'd the Inhabitants into *Bears*: By which Means, being depriv'd of the *Diſcretion* of *Humane Creatures*, and unable to provide for *Themſelves*; the King of the Country commited them to the *Keeping* of Two or Three of his *Beef-Eaters*; who took the Office, with no other Proſpect, than to live at their Eaſe, on the *Perquiſites* of it; and were, conſequently, more inclinable to provide Diet, to their *own* Taſte, than to that of the Metamorphos'd *Animals*, which had been deliver'd into their Cuſtody. — They had, however, ſo much Gratitude, for the Profit, accruing from their *Grant*, as to reſolve, That the Poor Creatures ſhou'd want nothing, that was *Strong*, and *Savoury*: But they had not the Judgment, to conſider, That a *Man*, when he becomes a *Bear*, requires a *coarſer* Kind of Nouriſhment, than he was accuſtomed to, while a *Rational Creature!* — They gave 'em nothing to drink but *Brandy*; and fed 'em with *Cock-Broth*, and *Forc'd-Meats*; 'till they, All, grew giddy, and light-headed, and were taken with a dangerous *Vertigo*.

A YOUNG Shepherd, who had been brought up a little *wildly*; and, who, by living much among Beaſts, had acquainted himſelf with the *Nature* of *Bears*, undertook to *Board 'em Cheaper*; and built, and open'd, to that End, a *New Houſe of Entertainment*; where, for the ſame Rates which were paid his Rivals, he treated the Animals, in their own Way, with *raw Horſe Fleſh* inſtead of *Ragouſts*; and *Spring Water*, in the Place of *Brandy*. — The *Bears* were ſtrangely delighted, at a Change, they were, ſo able to reliſh; and flock'd, in Tranſport, to their *New Ordinary*; where they *grinn'd*, and grew *fat*, upon a Diet, which was adapted to their Palates: So that, in a little Time, not a *Cub*, of any *Quality*, cou'd make a Meal, upon their *Old Commons*. And the poor Shepherd, who provided for them, *ſo judiciouſly*, had all their Cuſtom, for the future, and became Richer, than the *King's own Bear-Wards!*

HOW ſuch an odd Story as this came in my Way, I know not; But I will leave it, as I found it: For I am in a Humour to talk of the *Theatres*.

THE *Royal Company of Comedians* differs from the *South Sea-Company*, the *Bank*, and other *Acting Companies*, of this *City*, in this one Point, among more, That It has *Directors*, but no *Governour*. — It is certain, however, that thoſe *Gentlemen*, whom they call their *Managers*, have had all poſſible Advantage on their Side. The Court-Authority, and Countenance, went with them. — The *Noble*, and the *Ignoble*, join'd, in a long, and unreaſonable Partiality, to ſupport them, *without Rivals*; in direct Oppoſition to the Intereſt of their own Pleaſure; which is, undoubtedly, beſt provided for, when *Rival Theatres* contend, which ſhall, moſt, deſerve Encouragement. — It is worth while, then, to examine, how they *loſt* this Advantage. And I take the *Fact* to be thus.

THE good *Old Patentee*, of the *New Theatre* died, under a Length of Oppreſſion; and left his *Right*, and his *Houſe*, to his *Son*; an Unfear'd, and Friendleſs Youth! of whom it might then have been ſaid, as of *Chamont*, in the *Orphan*,

"*His* Hopes *were* all *his Fortune!*

HE *Open'd*, againſt a Tide of *Prejudice*; and acted, many Years, not only, without *Favour*, but almoſt without *Notice*, at leaſt from the *Faſhionable World*. — He try'd every *Reaſonable* Art of *Pleaſing*, without Succeſs! — He reviv'd the beſt *Old Plays*, and brought on ſeveral *New Ones!* but had, often, the Mortification to oppoſe his own *Induſtry*, and the ſublimeſt Scenes of *Shakeſpear*, to the cold Encouragement of *Empty Boxes!* — What ſhou'd he do, in this Caſe? — The Torrent of Opinion was *againſt him*. Good *Senſe*, and ſolid *Thinking*, were as Uſeleſs to him as his *Boxkeepers!* — At laſt, by a Quickneſs in his *Natural Wit*; and a Satyrical Sharpneſs in his *Obſervation*, He perceiv'd, he had nothing to do, if he wou'd have the *Game* play'd into his Hands, but to lay aſide his *Judgment*, and abandon Himſelf to his *Fancy*.

IN Purſuance of this lucky *Diſcovery*, He compos'd a *New Species* of *Entertainment*, which had an infinite deal of *Senſe* in them; but it was only the Senſe of *Seeing*. — It is ſcarce poſſible to conceive the *Eaſe*, which this Reformation of the Stage gave the Bulk of our *Genteel Audiences!* — They cou'd, now, laugh out, without Reſtraint; for they were no longer in Danger of *being Merry, in the wrong Place!* They felt no Weight of *Words*, which had, formerly, *lain heavy* upon their *Underſtandings*: And, the Burden of their *Attention* being, ſo commodiouſly, *lighten'd*, they *came*, and *ſaw*, and were *ſatisfied*.

THE old *Managers* were indiſcreet enough not only to *envy*, but to *imitate* him. — They made That their *Choice*, which, in their *Rival*, had been *Neceſſity*. But, attempting it, with inferior Genius, they appear'd ſo aukward, and ungraceful, in it, that they *compell'd* their partial *Admires to take Notice, That they were excell'd!* — And, ſo, taught 'em, from that Time forward

[ Price Two Pence. ]

ward, to believe it probable, That, ſince, in *one* Point, they had, ſo manifeſtly, the *Diſadvantage*, they might, in *Others* too, have been rather *Fortunate*, than ſo *Deſerving*, as they had concluded them.

THUS, the *Young*, and *Oppreſs'd*, became a Match for the *Old*, and *Proſperous*. — He has continued, ever ſince, to maintain the Ground he won; 'till the Current is, now, turn'd, and diſpos'd to *run, in his Favour.*

SO far, his *Wit* has carried him. We are to look out for his *Judgment hereafter*. But, for my Part, I am of Opinion, That, when he ſhall have *toy'd* us into Good Humour enough to forgive him a little *Reaſon*, he will have Courage, and Generoſity, to reſtore the Stage to its Dignity; and exchange our *Juleps* for *Subſtantial Diet*, as ſoon as our ſick Stomachs ſhall have recover'd Strength enough to digeſt it. — There is ſcarce a ſurer *Proof*, That a Man has *Worth*, than the Reſpect, which he ſhews the *Worthy*: And I was delighted, the other Day, with the Praiſes, in which I heard it told, at an *Aſſembly*, That the *OLD BATCHELOR* is, by this Gentleman's Voluntary Offer, to be acted, next *Monday*, at the *Theatre*, in *Lincoln's Inn Fields*, for the Benefit of ſo Learned a Benefactor to the Stage, as *Mr. DENNIS*.

UPON my expreſſing ſome Concern, That it was not rather a Play, of Mr. *Dennis*'s own Writing, I was inform'd, That the Maſter of that *Theatre*, who ſought all Opportunities of ſhewing his Eſteem of ſo Excellent, and ſo Injur'd, a Judge of Wit, and Learning, had left the Choice of the Play to Mr. *Dennis himſelf*; who had pitch'd upon the above-mention'd, becauſe it was a Work of his old Friend Mr. *Congreve*. — I acknowledg'd the *Generoſity* of the Maſter of the *Theatre*, and the *Modeſty* of the *Gentleman*, whom he treats with ſo well-judg'd a Humanity: But I cou'd not avoid indulging a Fit of talkative *Spleen*, againſt that *Malice*, or *Ignorance*, which has, more than once, appear'd, in the Diſcountenance of ſome Writings, from which the *Name* of Mr. *Dennis*, will, long, continue to receive Honour, after his *Body* ſhall be Duſt, and Aſhes!

THE Stupidity, which follows *Prejudice*, has made Thouſands of his Cotemporaries inſenſible of his Great Merit, which, if they allow'd their Reaſon to examine it, they wou'd be *charm'd by*, and take a *Pride* to *encourage*. — The Terror with which young Writers have accuſtom'd themſelves to hear, and to talk of, his *Auſterity*, and of his Averſion againſt *Scriblers*, has ſpread abroad a falſe Opinion, that he is *Ill-natur'd*, where he is only *impartial*: And, that he is an Enemy to *Wit*, and *Learning*, while he is only ſuch to the *Prophaners* of them.

IT is pleaſant to obſerve, to what a whimſical Degree this *Dread* of *Criticks* has been propagated; and how far down, into Low Life, we may trace the Effects of our Poet's miſtaken Outcries, who, by giving their *Shepherds* the Name of *Wolves*, have taught the Clowns to ſet their Dogs upon 'em, and cut off the Defence of their own Fold. Honeſt Mr. *David Cook*, the ingenious *Bell-Man* of *Pye Street Corner*, is, I find, againſt the Opening of the *New Year*, under terrible Apprehenſions, from the Impreſſions he has been fill'd with of the Dangers, all Good *Works* are expos'd to.

" Great Sirs! *my Muſe has* You, *her Guardians choſe*,
" *Againſt the* railing Malice *of her* Foes;
" *For, ſhe perceives*, theſe well-meant lines *muſt bear*
" *The* CRITICK's Cenſures, *who will* Nothing ſpare!

I was viſiting, where one of honeſt Mr. *Cook*'s *GREAT SIRS* ask'd him, *Why he was afraid of Criticks?* and was much edified by his Anſwer—*One Mr.* Pope, *Sir, an ingenious Member, of OUR Fraternity, knows much, of theſe Matters; and has ſaid it, in Print, That*

" Criticks *proceed, without the leaſt Remorſe,*
" *Seize on our* Fame, *and put their Laws in Force.*

'THO' I ſmil'd at the *Turn* of this Reaſon for the Fears of ſo ſafe a Muſe as Mr. *Cook*'s, yet I can't help wiſhing, that no great Writer had ever allow'd himſelf to join the common Cry againſt Criticks. — If the Poets have *no Art*, they are a Race of contemptible *Triflers!* And, if they have *Art*, they have *Criticiſm*. — Whoever is a good *Poet*, is, and muſt be, *Himſelf*, a *Critick*. — To be afraid of a *Judge*, is the Mark of a *criminal Conſcience* —But the ſevere, and manly, Cenſures, which are peculiar to Mr. *Dennis*'s Writings, have encreas'd the Number of his Enemies, by a piercing *Sharpneſs*, which they carry with them? Such Arguers, if they had liv'd with *Cato*, wou'd have made War upon that *noble Plainneſs*, which diſtinguiſh'd, and ſupported, his Character: And refus'd the Reverence, due to his *Virtues*, becauſe His *Manners* were not ſupple enough, to fall in with their Notions of *Politeneſs*.

THE beſt Way to become acquainted with a Writer is, to look for him in his Writings: — His *Soul*, which is his Nobleſt *Self*, lives there, and is, there *diſcover'd*. — How often have I remember'd (with Pain, for the Infamy it muſt, one Day bring us) That the moſt generous, and extenſive, Deſign, that ever was conceived by Man, with Relation to the *Groundwork* of *Criticiſm*, in *Poetry*, was once, undertaken, by this Gentleman, and a Subſcription for it propos'd, upon the moſt moderate Terms, with ſo diſproportion'd a Succeſs, that after a Year or two's fruitleſs Application, he publiſh'd a *Specimen* of his intended Work, with an Apology for not proceeding in it: Becauſe, after ſo long a Trial, he had been able to procure no more than *Seventy or Eighty Subſcribers*, whoſe *NAMES* he printed, to their future Glory! For, they will be read, an Age or two hence, with a Veneration, not unlike That, with which the *Athenians* engrav'd thoſe of the *Three Hundred Patriot Greeks*, who, defended the Streight, of *Thermopylæ*, againſt the Fury of the *Perſian* Army. — So, wou'd thoſe *Noble Few* have defended the Honour of their Country's *Judgment*, againſt an Inundation, of *Ignorance* and *Preſumption*.

WHAT will make this Fact more wonder'd at, is, — That it happen'd at a Time, when a boundleſs Profuſion of Encouragement was pour'd out, upon all Pretenſions, but Thoſe of *Learning*, and of *Modeſty!* — But it will not, I hope, be *believ'd*, That the *Tragedy* of *APPIUS* and *VIRGINIA* was acted, three or four Times, and *forgotten*, in ſpite of thoſe powerful Paſſions, and ſtrong Pictures of tranſported Nature, which it, every where, abounds with: Or, that *Shakeſpear*'s *CORIOLANUS* cou'd be alter'd, by ſuch a Hand as Mr. *Dennis*'s, and ſo ſtrikingly, to its Advantage, and yet brought on, without Succeſs, where *Shakeſpear*'s *RICHARD THE THIRD*, rack'd, and mutilated, by a barbarous *Player*, ran into Fame, and Applauſe, and drew Audiences, every Seaſon!

BUT I can never expect Room, in ſuch a Paper as the *PLAIN DEALER*, to touch the Merits of this Gentleman's Writings, for whoſe Benefit, as above, the Play of *Monday* next, is to be acted: And, who, now, deſcending apace into the *Vale* of *Years*, ought to find his Way made ſmoother for him; and loſe Sight of theſe malignant Enmities, which his ſtronger Days have grappled with. — There can be no-body, who is a Friend, either to Learning, or Humanity, and who has his Heart in the right Place, but muſt feel a generous Delight, in being *preſent, for His Benefit*, whoſe whole Life has been taken up, with *Eſſays, for the Benefit of Others*. — The *Brave*, and the *Beautiful*, will agree, in a Reſolution, to Shine out, upon this Occaſion, where They will be known to *appear in the Cauſe of Wiſdom*: And, where, to be *ſeen*, is to be *honour'd, Themſelves*, for *doing Honour* to *unrewarded Excellence*.

Printed for *J. Roberts*, at the *Oxford-Arms*, in *Warwick-Lane*. Where *Compleat* SETTS may be had.